

Ira Hager: [Inaudible].

Interviewer: No, I don't think you did. So were in Logan at the time of the armed march?

Ira Hager: Oh yes.

Interviewer: When had you come there?

Ira Hager: I'd come there in 1914.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Ira Hager: There was a condition in Logan County _____ to 1914 when I went there. I can't speak to before I went there. I can't tell you what happened before I went there. But I went there in 1914. The operators had the law retained – they were retainers, deputy sheriffs, line guards, and some of them were elected deputy sheriffs, selected by the sheriff. The idea was to keep the union out. And quite a number of episodes happened, violent episodes, you know? But I don't guess we ought to go into that.

Interviewer: Well if you want to tell me about it I'd love to hear about it.

Ira Hager: It was dangerous for a man to talk in favor of the union, you know. Something would happen to you; I expect some men lost their lives, and great numbers of them were arrested, thrown in jail. Some of them were beat up. Actually it was _____ difficult, 1924, and they weren't firing the elections, they were – they had an extension at the courthouse, where they have the big bell, you know, have a cupola, and they had a place up there where they'd change ballots.

One man who was – voted to the Republican ticket, he was a colored man, maybe killed him on the spot. I got affidavits [audio interference] episodes and sent them to the department of justice, _____ United States Commission. I wasn't interested in a fight between the co-operators and miners, I was interested in politics. Had quite a few--two or three deputy sheriffs sort of support me. My friends were uneasy about it, probably.

One lady came in and said, "They're going to kill you, so I just wanted to tell you about _____ story."

Interviewer: Who did she think was going to be after you?

Ira Hager: The deputy sheriffs.

Interviewer: I don't understand why the deputy sheriffs were after you.

Ira Hager: I filed affidavits that they were.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Ira Hager: *[Inaudible]* were doing, you know, and then they appointed some marshals; I think about 40. If they give us trouble, why we'd file an affidavit and _____ over that there strategy. I didn't ask *[inaudible]*. They wouldn't let us speak in the schoolhouses; Republicans couldn't speak in the schoolhouses. They had to speak in the open air. And I had the county so well organized that I can call the captain of the precinct and he'd have a crowd there in 15 minutes for me if I got a speaker.

So we elected part of the ticket. I think I'd have selected prosecuting attorney, *[audio interference]*. I don't know just what they did. I didn't campaign at the time, I was anxious to elect a new sheriff.

Interviewer: Who was sheriff at that time?

Ira Hager: Don Chafin.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Ira Hager: I'd like to vote the sheriff and he would change the system, you know. But the system still *[audio interference]* so bad.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me how Don Chafin's system got set up in the first place? I know that he had a lot of deputies working for him that were trying to keep the union out.

Ira Hager: You go there and look at the record you'll see where he appointed hundreds of deputy sheriffs.

Interviewer: Do you know how the --

Ira Hager: When I ran for prosecuting attorney I can show you what court order was _____ for over 400 _____ cases and all that, prosecuting attorney, well I didn't -- sheriff _____ county _____. And when the election was over why, of course they had a deal, _____ me. *[Inaudible]*.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Now I know that when the sheriff's office first got set up in Logan County it wasn't used to break the union. How did the sheriff's office come to be used by the co-operators?

Ira Hager: It was generally understood that the sheriff got ten percent _____ on that every time in coal. And he became a rich man.

Interviewer: Was Don Chafen the first sheriff who got this royalty?

Ira Hager: So far as I know. I don't know what happened before I went to Logan County.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about the armed march?

Ira Hager: I have a _____ -- I have a history of it somewhere in my -- among my books and files. I can't remember dates so well. I'm old, you know? They had sent so many organizers in there and they were so badly treated that they decided to come and march, you know. I expect there were 3,000 or 4,000, maybe 5,000 or 6,000. Some of them were ex-soldiers, and served in World War -- World War One. I had a cousin that had a machine gun, and he told me that after the march was over he just kept the gun. They armed him with a machine gun; he got a machine gun.

The armed march, that extended all the way from the head of Cripple Creek to Fire Mountain, and they called out every able-bodied man that could do from Logan County, I guess, great numbers. And they just wasted a lot of ammunition, firing over -- firing from the Logan side and -- and they wasted a lot of ammunition firing from the miners' side. They shoot, you know, and _____ bang, hoping that it wouldn't have hit somebody, I guess. But it kind of did -- there were several killed, you see. I know --

Interviewer: You said that you had a brother who was a miner.

Ira Hager: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who fought on the other side there. Can you tell me about him?

Ira Hager: He was later elected constable in Lincoln County and a fellow killed him. He was nearsighted and he told him he had a warrant for his arrest and the man just shot him. He was tried, and I went down to provide counsel to help prosecute him, _____ to the family. There's nine -- my brother-in-law knew all the jury men --

he said there was nine bootleggers on the jury, and then this fellow was a bootlegger too and they turned him loose.

Interviewer: So you said that he fought with the miners in the battle?

Ira Hager: Yeah, I don't know if he fought or not; he was with them at any rate.

Interviewer: Did he ever tell you about their side of it?

Ira Hager: He said the way the miners retreated when they wanted to organize, thought they were justified, said – admitted that it was the wrong opposition, that – but he said they had worse *[inaudible]* in Logan County.

Interviewer: Did he tell you any sort of events of the battle?

Ira Hager: Well he said they were just firing and firing. They killed one deputy sheriff. They captured some local deputies and some of them belonged to the Order of Masons, and the Masons came up from Boone County courthouse -- Boone County and tried to save their lives – and did save their lives; they turned them loose, they released them finally.

Interviewer: Do you know who those men were, the Masons?

Ira Hager: Phillip Mitchell was one of them, and a fellow by the name of Young was one, I think.

Interviewer: Howard Young?

Ira Hager: Howard Young?

Interviewer: Uh-huh. That's interesting. So do you know anything more about that, the Masons from Boone County, came --

Ira Hager: About what?

Interviewer: Do you know anything more about that, the Masons from Boone County came down and tried to get them free?

Ira Hager: They went up on Forks of Coal, you know?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Ira Hager: And I don't think they ever reached them. They came out of _____. They were hid out in the woods, you know, _____. But Mitchell was a pretty courageous man and he told them if you kill us you'll suffer for it, or words to that effect. They probably were a little bit afraid to kill him.

Interviewer: Do you know much about how Chafin got together an army to fight the invading miners?

Ira Hager: Well the coal operators, you know, they had a lot of influence, and the businesspeople _____ had to be with the operators, you know, bankers. A lot of young fellows just volunteers to see what happened, you know.

Interviewer: You didn't fight in a battle, did you?

Ira Hager: No, I – I had a brother on the other side. I wasn't afraid to, but I knew that rights – I knew the miners had been mistreated in Logan County. And I knew that it was a buddy system, you know?

In 1924 election they took a big piece of steel off of my door, _____ rifled my files and scattered them all over the floor. I don't know whether that was the time or not, just before the election, that I was shot at; bullet just flew by my face.

Interviewer: And this was because probably because you were --

Ira Hager: *[Crosstalk]* Politics, yeah.

Interviewer: -- filing these affidavits?

Ira Hager: I had no interest in men on a march. I'm not an operator or a miner. But they'd come in and talk with me once in a while and try to hint like they thought I'd been talking too much, you know. That's the way they did

I was representing a client and he invited me to eat lunch. And while eating lunch the subject came up, and I said, "Why don't the miners organize Logan County?" And next thing I knew he went right straight to the deputy sheriff's. Even the kids were spies.

Interviewer: Who was it that you had had lunch with that you'd said this to?

Ira Hager: Thompson, L.H. Thompson.

Interviewer: What was he, just a friend of yours?

Ira Hager: Friend of mine, and I was his attorney.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Ira Hager: He wouldn't have told anybody.

Interviewer: But it was somebody that overheard your conversation?

Ira Hager: It was probably a [crosstalk] woman retained, or the kids, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ira Hager: They'd retain kids to find out what is being said, you know. Had all kinds of spies, you know.

Interviewer: So you think that one of the kids just went and told and it got back to them? What happened to you then? Did they come and sort of warn you not to say that again?

Ira Hager: No, they just hinted that I'd been talking too much.

Interviewer: They didn't do anything more than that?

Ira Hager: That's all.

Interviewer: But they kind of scared you?

Ira Hager: No, Don met me on the street one day and he said, "You've been talking too much lately." I just wondered – I – I was wanting them to – I had no interest in an organization, I simply wondered why they didn't organize. And I wanted to see what he would say, you know. He said they didn't have guts enough to organize.

Interviewer: Well he made it pretty difficult for them, didn't he?

Ira Hager: Thompson?

Interviewer: No, Chafin. Chafin made it pretty hard for them to organize.

Ira Hager: Oh yes. He was employed to do that, retain. No doubt about that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Ira Hager: It's a well-known fact, I guess. But at least everybody told me he was. And somebody paid all these deputy sheriffs and ____.

Interviewer: Right. You said that you were going to write a history; what type of things did you want to put in your book?

Ira Hager: Well, I'll have a history of the Battle of ____ – I mean the Civil War, south of _____. And a history of some of the early settlers, what they did, how they lived. And a history of the timber industry, Tennyson and the ____ River and Mud River, and some of them on the Big Sandy, and I'll have a little bit about the Spanish-American War, things that happened in my time, you know.

Interviewer: How fascinating. You aren't going to put anything about the union or the labor troubles in it?

Ira Hager: Oh yes, I'm going to put something in there.

Interviewer: That's real interesting. Did you – yeah?

Ira Hager: I suspect you --

Interviewer: What were you going to say?

Ira Hager: I've forgotten now.

Interviewer: Oh. Because – where did you grow up? Where were you born?

Ira Hager: I was born in Lincoln County. I left home when I was about 16, worked on the railroad, was a water boy and Frank Walton and them, they found out I could keep a set of books, and had to keep time, about 40 men, lived in camp cars. It's pretty simple life; pretty tough too, in ____ Valley. I made a little money, went to Marshall College. I went to a special teacher and then went to Marshall College. Went to Hadley Normal first, though. I didn't – I went to the university, and took law.

Interviewer: How was it that you decided to go into law?

Ira Hager: I always wanted to be a lawyer. I made a ____.

Interviewer: That's a really fine story. It sounds like you really made yourself?

Ira Hager: Well no one ever helped me. My mother – when I was a little boy I wanted a book, to learn to read. And we was so poor – it was in the

Cleveland Panic. And she found out where she could be a second-grade reader and she traded a rooster [*crosstalk*] get the book for me. And I learned to read the story about the ducks and the fox, you know: the fox wanted to get a duck, he saw them in the river, you know, swimming. So he got a little above them and floated timber down, put timber in the river, _____ stick [*audio interference*]. Scared them at first, and they'd circle around and then – then they flew back. Then he got to stretching himself out on the log and went down and got two ducks. And that interested me, and I learned to read all that book at home. I found if I could read that story I could read all of them.

Interviewer: Isn't that marvelous? And you just taught yourself? You got somebody to help you out?

Ira Hager: Well my father was a poor man. He had good circumstances at one time. He owned a farm and lots of cattle and horses and sheep and hogs. And he owned a watermill one time. And he had a tannery, tanned, you know. But he went blind; he was a soldier in the Civil War, and his eyes got infected, presumably from drying them on an old dirty towel, you know. And the doctors treated his eyes but they didn't know what to do; they made them worse. And he went blind just about the time when [*inaudible*]. We had it pretty hard.

I had one brother, who was a good manager, and he helped the farm out, had cattle and horses and had a wagon and made money. And what little my father had he gave it to him, and that's what he wanted him to do, you know?

Interviewer: What was the Cleveland Panic?

Ira Hager: 1896.

Interviewer: What was that? I'm not familiar with that.

Ira Hager: Oh it was a terrible panic. Most of the people were farmers and they had enough to eat. Most of the people lived on farms then; not so many people in the cities, you know, and most of the people had plenty of food; we had plenty of food. But we would borrow for clothing and they had a terrible time raising enough money to pay taxes. And Bryan run against McKinley and McKinley was elected and McKinley asked for a protective tariff and the businesses and industries of the country had to pay for it, and everything started up in Cleveland. But it wasn't Cleveland's fault; people had just expanded too much, expanded and expanded. And too many started a business, maybe a store, maybe a timber job, maybe a

mine, mining or something. Too many railroads were being built. And they just had to sort of catch up, you know. And businesses started to close down. And I think that'll happen again – in your time; I may not live to see it.

Interviewer: Well, you know, those kinds of panics have happened a number of times in this country's history now, so it may still happen again.

Ira Hager: Would you like to have a root beer?

Interviewer: Yeah, that would be real nice.

Ira Hager: I have a heart condition *[audio interference]* for it. Sit down and –
[Audio break]

Interviewer: So can you tell me what happened – what it was like in the town of Logan when the miners started coming over the mountain there?

Ira Hager: The people were all excited, and a lot of people got out of the city, drove out in cars and trains. I have a cousin that lived in Williamson and she called me up and she said, "You all know a march is coming in to Logan County," says, "They was right here in the apartment next to you, miners' headquarters, and they know what's going on." She says, "You better get out of there. They'll tear it all to pieces." And I didn't know what might happen, you know.

And I went down to visit my brother in Lincoln County and _____ get out _____. Not that I was afraid, but it's – I could tell you later on why I wasn't afraid. But I don't want to appear like I wasn't afraid when everybody was afraid.

Interviewer: So you spent most of the time over in Lincoln County with your brother?

Ira Hager: Yeah.

Interviewer: This wasn't the brother who was the miner, was it?

Ira Hager: No, no, it was another one. I wanted to visit him anyway, you know. And we went down there.

Interviewer: What did things look like from Lincoln County? There wasn't any -
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Ira Hager: No trouble down there.

Interviewer: No trouble over there?

Ira Hager: I didn't want to get messed up in the armed marches, to tell you the truth about it. I didn't have any interest, except what any private citizen would have. I wasn't an operator, I wasn't a miner, and I didn't feel like I was under any obligations, except that I thought that they should treat the miners the way I thought they ought to be treated I would have *[inaudible]* these boys were violating the laws.

But the operators had churches, and they forced the miners to take whatever doctrine they wanted, and they had the preachers – they practically owned the preachers. And they had the judge, the prosecuting attorney, county court, and 200 to 600 deputy sheriffs. And it's pretty hard to outfit them up, you know?

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit more about the preachers? Did you know any of these preachers who you say were bought out by the operators?

Ira Hager: No, the church was built in the coal camps and they were very loyal to the operators. *[Laughs]* And I think they controlled the preachers: if a preacher would have spoke in favor of a coal miner he'd have been fired.

Interviewer: Did most of the coal miners of that time go to church pretty regularly?

Ira Hager: No, I didn't see many of them. Maybe their wives would go. Maybe a few of them would go.

Interviewer: Do you know what the miners did mostly for their sort of recreation?

Ira Hager: I don't recall. Some of their children played ball, you know. I think some of the miners would get back in the mountains and hunt game.

Interviewer: Right. Now you were living actually in Logan, in the town?

Ira Hager: Yes.

Interviewer: And most of the miners probably lived out on these coal camps, out by the temples?

Ira Hager: Yeah, Logan County was just one coal camp after another, all those hollows, you know, creeks. In Logan there's practically a strange city, you know. You've seen cities where they've just built stringy, you know. Never can get a pretty city, you know, but Logan was practically a coal camp.

Interviewer: What sort of people lived actually in the town of Logan?

Ira Hager: Oh they're good for the most – most of them.

Interviewer: Were most of them associated with the coal industry in some way?

Ira Hager: Well, there was an affinity between them and the coal operators, business connection, you know. They didn't want to be run out of the county anyway.

Interviewer: Right.

Ira Hager: And everybody was afraid of the deputy sheriffs.

Interviewer: But you're saying that most of the people that lived in the town were like businessmen and bankers and --

Ira Hager: Bankers and lawyers and --

Interviewer: Lawyers like yourself.

Ira Hager: Yeah. Like any other town. And I think Logan County produced some of the best people in the world, and if you stayed out of the – you kept your mouth tight, kept a tight mouth, they wouldn't bother you. But you better not be talking unionism.

Interviewer: That's right. Can you tell me a little bit about what the town looked like, I mean what the streets looked like and the buildings and so forth?

Ira Hager: Oh, Logan's a pretty little town. Narrow streets with – pretty clean town.

Interviewer: Can you tell me, when you were working as a lawyer what kinds of cases came to you? What sorts of things did you handle for people?

Ira Hager: I handled what they call the run-of-the-mill, nearly all kinds of cases: divorce cases, bankruptcy cases, murder cases, felony cases of all classes of violations of the penal statutes. And I handled

some land suits, and I handled automobile damages, if a person was hurt in an automobile accident. And then I switched to state compensation, and that was the most lucrative practice I ever had, state compensation.

Interviewer: So --

Ira Hager: I'd rather you wouldn't mention that.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

[End of Audio]